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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of innovation in library operations, with an aim to incorporate innovative procedures that achieve convenience in practice, and efficiency and effectiveness in a simultaneous economic reduction. The methodology outlined in this paper is that of Best Practices. The objective of this method is to examine an organization's performance in a set of activities in order to accept it and, as a result, to adopt better practices in processes and improve its competitive position. The steps of the methodology include: (1) staff selection and training of those who will implement the method; (2) specification of focus areas; (3) examination of internal data; (4) selection of the tool; (5) breaking into basic pieces; (6) combination with the global functions which it implements; (7) determination if it adds value and how the cost could be reduced without reduction of its functionality; (8) analysis of the results and final report; (9) definition of actions and strategy development. The paper provides a brief definition of the five learning disciplines designed to enhance a staff development program: system thinking; personal mastery; mental models; shared visions; and team learning. (Contains 23 references.) (AEF)

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THE INNOVATION IN EVERY DAY LIFE OF LIBRARIES

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Innovation and libraries

The information society, which followed on the industrial age, lets the opportunity these days more than before, for the information development and dissemination, in various forms and media in a local, national and international level. Additionally, individuals feel members of an open information system, not fixed by the locality and institutional isolation. Academic libraries gradually open to the public which are individuals who seek and use information in different ways. These signs are encouraging, but there is a need for the revision of codes and practice if optimal library services are to be provided for a mobile population. Additionally, the situation complexes more by the plenty of scholarly publishing, information sources, vendors, technological and organizational systems which guide to a confuse with a cost increase. The problem however is not the rules and procedures themselves, the problem are the combination of them with costs and funding in a time that ç óõãêñÜôçóç ôùí ðñïûðïëïãéóìþí ôùí âéâëéïèçêþí åßíáé åðéôáêôéêÞ áíÜãêç äéáèíþò. ÐáñÜëëçëá ìå facing the challenges of change, which is an essential procedure, at the same time libraries enjoy the simplification of every day routines. Both of them ðïõ ìïéÜæïõí ìéá áíôéöáôéêÞ áëëÜ ðñáãìáôéêÞ êáôÜóôáóç are depended on technological improvements and development. There are two judgements that librarians have to be able to make about an operation such as library: the effectiveness and the efficiency.

- Is the library effective if it achieves the purposes for which it exists? (i.e. user satisfaction).
- Is it efficient if it achieves its objectives with the minimum of resources [1]?

It is generally accepted for these days practice that to enhance effectiveness, achieve excellence, and ensure survival ability, library leaders need, in full collaboration with staff members, develop conscious, explicit processes for organizational change. There is the sense within the field that investment now is demanded in both technological innovation and organizational change to accommodate it. [2]

Continuous planning, which treats planning as an evolving process, incorporates reference to the environment and adaptations based on learning. This contributes to the concept of the learning organization, defined by David A. Garvin, as one that is "skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior tï reflect new knowledge and insights." [3]

The library functions then involve and presume communication and the continuous interaction, which advance and evolve the library progress and performance.

So, the final question is: Can innovative procedures achieve convenience in practice, efficiency and effectiveness in a simultaneous economic reduction?

According to the Green paper on Innovation of European Union [4] Innovation in brief is:

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- The renewal and enlargement of the range of products and services and the associated markets.
- The establishment of new methods of production, supply and distribution.
- The introduction of changes in management, work organization, and the working conditions and skills of the workforce.

Innovation in process accomplishes the increase of productivity and the reduction of the cost. Innovation is not necessarily synonymous with high technology, although this is increasingly involved in equipment, materials, software and methods. The above description proved that libraries belong to those professions, which use the innovation more than produce it, as the technological achievements and products are coming from external sources, so they become innovative in the range of process.

The term innovation process emphasizes on the manner in which the innovation is designed and produced at the different stages approaching and analyzing it (creativity, marketing, research and development, design, production and distribution). Innovation requires a diverse rich - information and interactive environment where people with different perspectives, work together toward a common objective, with accurate, up- to - date information and the proper tools. That's the only source of innovation. And that's procedure means communication.

Innovation is not a linear process, but rather a system of interactions, of comings and goings between different functions and different players whose experience, knowledge, know-how are mutually reinforcing and cumulative. The way libraries capture information declares a role of conversion. It is important to notice that the ability of the technology to capture information in one form and to deliver it in a different one. The function of analyzing, interpreting, synthesizing and packaging information on behalf of users will increase in importance [5].

This is why more and more importance is attached in practice to mechanisms for interaction within the organization (collaboration, between the different units and participation of employees in organizational innovation), as well as to the networks linking the organization to its environment (other organizations, support services, centers of expertise, research laboratories, etc).

As indicated above, Libraries and Innovation have common characteristics such as:

- the process,
- the technology transfer,
- the Communication and
- the intra- organizational and inter-organizational interactions.

Innovative process Organization in Libraries

The methodology, which is intended here, is that of Best Practices. Best practices are almost synonymous to Routines in this case, something quite common to libraries. Routines are the steady and normative rules and behavior models of the organizations. Although the changes in librarian's professional life are fast, it is unavoidable to hold some routines, that is to say the technology they use for the routines for a period of time.

Best practices are a significant test bed for the control of the changes and the effectiveness of the system. As the work environment is complex and interactive, it is necessary for the problem solver and the staff to have an overview of the whole system from time to time and to orient the objects, before decide the adaptations or the modifications. Furthermore, Best Practices help users of the system to learn from it and from their reactions. Their observations will identify improvements of the system as well as new skills and practices [6].

The objective of this method is to examine an organization's performance in a set of activities in order to accept it and as a result, to adopt better practices in processes and improve its competitive position. It is not certain that after examination the organization will accept the outlet practices and procedures. But mainly and above all, the method can provoke the use of other innovative techniques.

The method is proper for library practices because there are plenty of processes for every task and there is always space for improvement. A general issue that applies increasingly in the organization of library services, is that of self- service. Users prefer to serve themselves and the challenge to librarians is to design cataloguing and shelf systems that can help users to help themselves [7]. Surveys of shelf service users in the usa (1996) have provided the following results:

- average usage 30% of total circulation,
- ranges as high as 95% usage,
- less staff needed at circulation desk,
- reduction in cases of repetitive strain injury,
- privacy on research,
- image of the library
- additional time spent one on one students [8].

The steps of the methodology are the following:

1. Staff selection that will participate and training to the method. It is very important for those who are going to implement this method to know it and realize its results.
2. Specification of the areas that will be subject of the technique. It concerns to general objects and specific areas too, the collection building, the cataloguing and classification procedure, the circulation and interlibrary loan procedure and the selection of suppliers, the reference department and information dissemination.
3. Internal data collection to be examined. This is the most important session of the method.
4. Selection of the tool. In this case the selected tool is the value analysis which aims at determining the ways to obtain the maximum value from a service without cost increasing.
5. Brake into basic pieces.
6. Combination with the global functions which it implements.
7. Determination if it adds value and how the cost could be reduced without reduction of its functionality.
8. Analysis of examination results and the final report.
9. Definition of actions and strategy development.

This methodology evaluates the values of a process, that is to say the aesthetics, the function, the use. By undertaking value analysis, a service is re-evaluated and the processes are understood more clearly. The result of the procedure is quite often the innovation of functions and services because a new service that covers the same needs as before is created, and new defined functions will be fulfilled by new services.

While internal Best Practices may lead to improvements as a result of studying excellent performance within a functional area, organizations should look outside from their walls for Best practices to improve performance. That's the point benchmarking begins from.

When computers rushed in libraries every day life, staff catalogued documents once, avoiding the multiple entries of catalogue cards. As the procedure and the technologies went on librarians in an effort to simplify their work using copy cataloguing avoid the cataloguing process itself buying records from the National Bibliographies. Now the copy cataloguing process is transferred åí ðïëëïßò from the cataloguing unit to acquisitions Further more consortia foundation facilitated even more the copy cataloguing and mainly

extended the collections of participant libraries because of common holdings and interlibrary loan. In this way, aiming by the technology library earns working force by reducing the work cost, changes collection development policy and improves its services to users establishing new ones.

The Best Practices method is a continuous procedure for the organization, which implements them. The first benefit they could obtain from it is the improvements of closed functions and behaviors, which are new best practices. It is true that the next steps of benefits, such as:

- the definition of the periodic variability of cost in relative to routine and learning as well as
- the modification of function characteristics, the production of innovation

is a matter of the procedure of learning and the educational and training status of staff. Routine tasks actually demand little learning or creativity and expertise.

Innovators are characterized those who offer:

- new variant values and virtues, or/ and
- new variant satisfaction,

to users.

Staff must learn to non-routine tasks that demand specialization, creativity, and fantasy. For achieving this, the library management must have a learning orientation, by creating an environment where every member is continuously learning more about the services, the processes, the users, the technologies, the environment.

In sculpting the Learning Organization, Watkins and Marsick say that it has six action imperatives:

- to create continuous learning opportunities;
- to promote inquiry and dialogue;
- to encourage collaboration and team-learning;
- to establish systems to capture and share learning;
- to empower people toward a collective vision; and
- To connect the organization to its environment [9].

Learning and innovation in an academic library may fuel each other. Learning may lead to innovation, leading to more learning about and with that innovation and more innovation [10].

A staff development program that is designed to enhance generative learning might very well focus on the five core learning disciplines highlighted by Senge. Senge (1994) provides us with brief definitions of learning disciplines:

1. *System thinking* – a way of thinking about, and a language for describing and understanding, the forces and interrelationships that shape the behavior of systems;
2. *Personal mastery* – learning to expand our personal capacity to create the results we most desire, and creating an organizational environment that encourages all its members to develop themselves toward the goals and purposes they choose;
3. *Mental models* – reflecting on, continually clarifying, and improving our internal pictures of the world, and seeing how they shape our decisions and actions;
4. *Shared visions* – building a sense of commitment in a group, by developing shred images of the future we seek to create and the principles and guiding practices by which we hope to get there;

5. *Team learning* – transforming conversational and collective thinking skills, so those groups of people can reliably develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of individual members' talents.

Conclusions

Innovation is above all a social phenomenon. Through it, individuals and societies express their creativity, needs and desires. Its purpose, its effects or its methods thus intimately involve innovation contained in the social conditions in which they produce.

Innovation is not a strictly predefined model. In the final analysis, the history, culture, education, political and institutional organization and the economic structure of each society determine that society's capacity to generate and accept novelty. Innovator requires innovative thinking that is a skill needed by every member of the organization. It is the ability to constantly look for new possibilities, generate ideas, think together productively, make sound decisions and gain the commitment needed for rapid and effective implementation.

We in the academic library profession are living in exciting times. It is not just the speed of change which provides the excitement, but the recognition that we can make a significant contribution to the progress of the academic community. We must continue to develop our organizational, interpersonal and Information Technology based skills and apply them to the people/ information interface [11]. We need to embrace innovation, to learn how to learn, as the organizations we work for have to learn how to change.

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Back to contents

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